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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined Chicago teachers' opinions about school reform, the quality of their schools, and their perspectives on instruction and its improvement are presented in this paper. A survey mailed to 12,708 Chicago public elementary school teachers in late May and June of 1991 elicited an overall response rate of 70 percent. Findings indicate that citywide, teachers are moderately positive about school reform. However, although a majority of teachers support school reform, the overall level of endorsement is not a consensus opinion. Those with a higher sense of self-efficacy and who are more involved in local school governance are more likely to report change in classroom practices. However, more instructional change appears to be occurring in schools most in need of change, and teachers most in need of professional development are least likely to pursue it. Comments on the findings from representatives of the Teacher Advisory Group, Principal Advisory Group, and the Consortium Steering Committee are provided. Twenty-two tables/figures are included. (Contains 8 endnotes.) (LMI)

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Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn

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Report No. 1 on a Survey of CPS Elementary School Teachers

Sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research

Views on school reform Page 3

In general, negative developments, positive developments, LSCs, PPACs, school improvement plans. Differences among kinds of schools.

Views on school communities Page 7

Facilities, resources, safety, order, collegiality, teacher influence, teacher voice, shared mission, shared leadership, community relations, parent involvement. Differences among kinds of schools.

Views on instructional change Page 10

Expectations, competency, efficacy, satisfaction, changing practices, professional development. Differences among teacher groups.

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Teacher Survey Work Group: Chair, **John Q. Easton**, Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance ✦ **Anthony S. Bryk**, University of Chicago, Center for School Improvement ✦ **Mary Erina Driscoll**, University of Illinois at Chicago, College of Education ✦ **John G. Kotsakis**, Chicago Teachers Union ✦ **Penny A. Sebring**, Consortium on Chicago School Research ✦ **Arie J. van der Ploeg**, Chicago Public Schools, Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning

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Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn

Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn is the result of a collaborative project sponsored by the Consortium on Chicago School Research. In all, 12,708 Chicago Public elementary school teachers voluntarily responded to this survey. Some 401 schools (out of 473) obtained a response rate of 50 percent or greater, and will receive individual school profiles of their results. In a randomly selected sample of 80 schools, all 80 participated with a response rate of 75 percent. The overall response rate for the whole system was 70 percent. (A technical appendix and public use data file will be available in the near future.) Responses of this magnitude are rare in surveys unless respondents are strongly motivated. We provided no tangible incentives, however, for completing the survey. Rather, we interpret the high response rate as indicating teachers' desire to express their views to the general public and provide data for their own schools to help in planning and program development.

Altogether, the survey contained 8 pages of questions that required about 25 to 35 minutes to complete. Because of space limitations, this report discusses only the first five pages of the survey. Responses to questions dealing with reading and math instructional practices will appear in separate reports to be published later in the year.

The survey was administered in late May and June of 1991. In many cases, teachers completed the survey during a staff meeting called jointly by the principal and one or more teachers. In other cases, the principal alone or a group of teachers themselves called a meeting to administer the survey. In yet other schools, the principal or a teacher distributed the surveys which were completed and collected at a later time.

A variety of organizations with different perspectives collaborated in developing this survey to gather representative and objective information about teachers' views on school reform and on their school communities. Throughout this process, the Consortium sought suggestions from those people most knowledgeable about teachers' concerns — the teachers themselves. Many teachers devoted time and energy, offering ideas about what the survey should ask, how it should be administered, and how the results might be best distributed. A group of Chicago principals and administrators also provided much guidance. These same teachers and principals reacted to an earlier formulation of this report, helped us interpret results and improve the presentation of findings. We express sincere thanks to all who generously gave of their time to make this project successful. A partial list of teachers and principals follows.

Thomas Arnieri, Sherman
Allen Bearden, Montefiore
Eileen Camacho, Kosciuszko
Cydney Fields, Ray
Connee Fitch-Blanks, Kohn
Marcella Gillie, Bass
Rosemary Gonzales, Plamondon
Juris Graudnis, Audubon
Verna Gray, Mark Sheridan
Guadalupe Hamersma, Plamondon
Deanna Jordan, Skinner
Barbara Kato, Norwood Park
Patricia Knazze, Hendricks
Harriet Kornit, Darwin
Margaret Lebrecht, Lovett
Rudy Lubov, Bateman
Karen Morris, Saucedo
Sylvia Peters, Dumas
Alice Peters, Moos
Rosa Ramirez, McCormick Branch
Deanna Rattner, Mitchell
Pamela Samulis, Saucedo
Evelyn Smith, Foster Park
Kenneth Staral, Davis
Charles Usher, Fort Dearborn
Alice Vila, Barry

Editor's note: *Some survey questions have been shortened in this report because of space limitations. The original survey is available from the Consortium on request.*

This report reflects the interpretations of the authors. Although the Consortium Steering Committee provided technical advice and reviewed an earlier version of the report, no formal endorsement by these individuals, organizations or the full Consortium membership should be assumed.

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What Teachers Think About School Reform

The Chicago School Reform Act has generated enormous interest. *Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn* offered teachers the opportunity to share their views, experiences, and opinions with the general public, the Chicago Board of Education, and with individual school communities. The survey, developed by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, asked about: teachers' roles in shaping school policy and in making decisions; teachers' work conditions and time demands; instructional methods; and support from parents, other staff, and the surrounding community. The results of the survey provide the first information, from about 13,000 teachers, about their views. This report summarizes teachers' opinions about school reform, the quality of their schools, and their perspectives on instruction and its improvement.[1]

In General

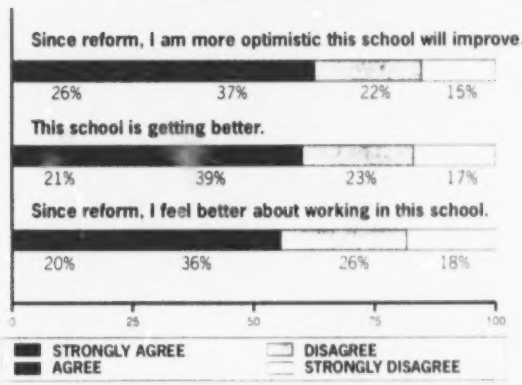
Some of the most interesting questions in this survey asked teachers about how school reform has affected them and their schools. Citywide, teachers are moderately positive. About 60 percent agreed that their school is getting better and that they are more optimistic about improvement since reform began. More than half said that they felt better about working in their school. Less than one-fifth of the teachers expressed strong negative attitudes about school reform. The latter is important as a gauge of the extent of teacher opposition to reform.

Although a clear majority of the teachers support school reform, the overall level of endorsement is not a consensus opinion. (For example, no statement in the chart to the left is affirmed by two-thirds of the teachers.) The data indicate considerable teacher support but they also indicate that a substantial proportion of faculty have at least some reservations. The importance of this distinction depends on one's persepctive. While it is fair to say that "on balance" teachers are pro-reform, it is also fair to assume that in many school communities cooperation among teachers around reform has yet to develop fully.

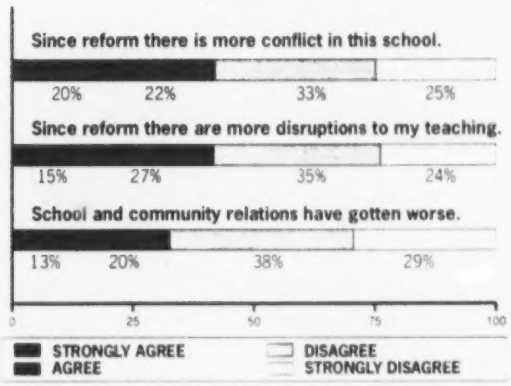
Prior to school reform, many feared that the radical change in school governance would result in negative consequences. For the most part, these have not occurred. Approximately 60 percent of the teachers disagreed with statements about increased conflict in their schools, more disruptions to teaching, and worsening relations between the surrounding community and the school. Approximately 15 percent of the teachers, however, strongly agreed that such problems are increasing in their schools.

The survey also inquired about the emergence of positive practices since reform. For the most part, teachers are evenly split as to whether or not such changes have occurred. The results show that about 50 percent of the teachers agree and 50 percent disagree on whether there is more cooperation in the school, whether teachers have more opportunities to influence policy, whether the principal spends more time seeking their opinions, and whether more parents are involved

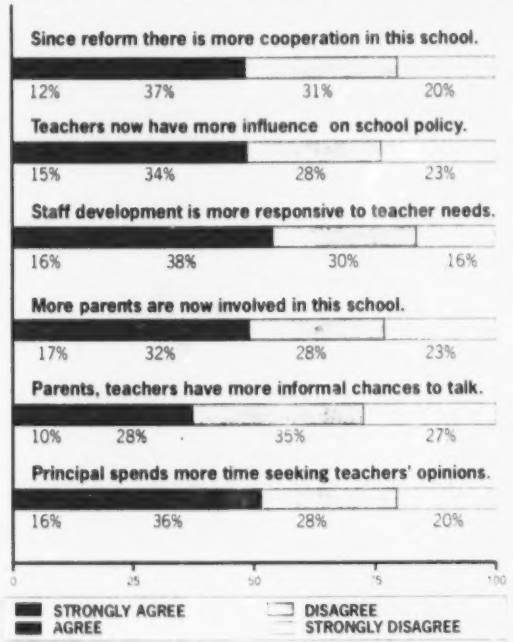
Are things getting better?



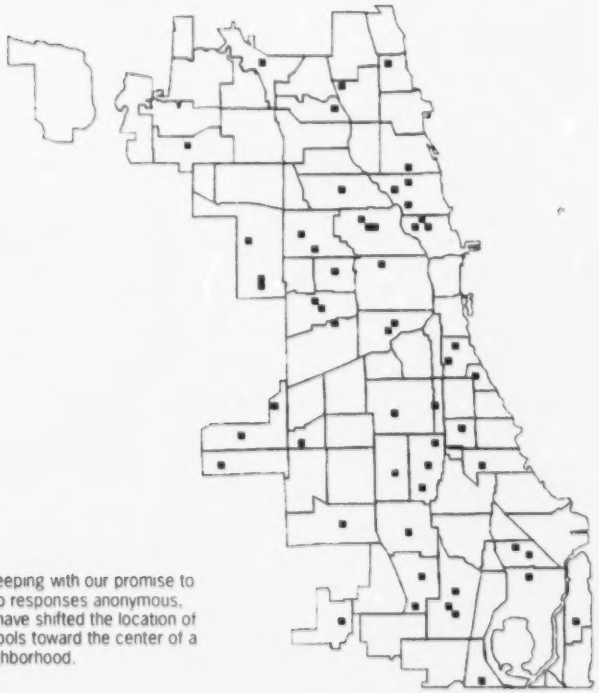
Are things getting worse?



Emergence of Positive Practices Since School Reform



Places Where Teachers See Reform Really Working



In keeping with our promise to keep responses anonymous, we have shifted the location of schools toward the center of a neighborhood.

in the school. A bare majority of teachers think that staff development is more responsive to their needs. Less than 40 percent report that they have more opportunities to talk informally with parents.

In order to get an overall assessment of teachers' views on school reform we created a General Reform Index that combines the teachers' responses to the questions on attitudes towards school reform (top chart, page 3) and whether negative and positive changes have resulted (bottom chart, page 3, chart on left). This index summarizes how teachers see reform in their school. In about three-quarters of the schools teachers are "pro-reform." In 62 Chicago elementary schools teachers see reform as really working. In these schools, the typical teacher has positive attitudes toward reform, indicates that disruptions and conflicts have not occurred and that positive educational practices are emerging. In another 241 schools, teachers are moderately positive. In 89 schools, teachers are somewhat negative, and in 9 schools, teachers are clearly negative. As the map below shows, the 62 solidly pro-reform schools are found in nearly every neighborhood of Chicago.

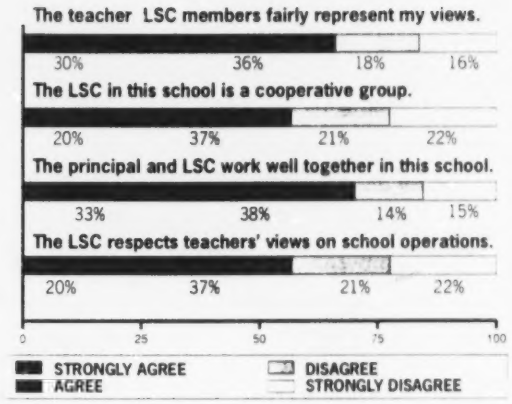
Thus, school location is not an important predictor of whether teachers embrace reform. Other aspects of schools are important, however, as we describe below.

Governance

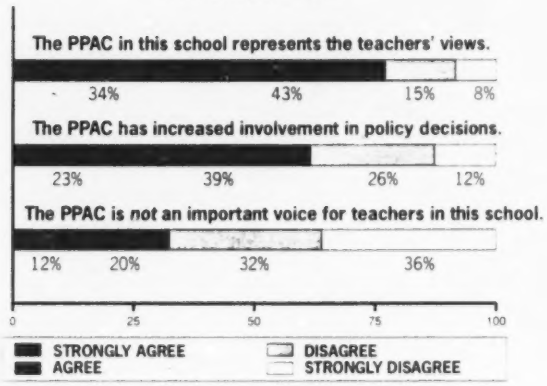
The Chicago School Reform Act mandated several specific governance changes. Key among these is the local school council (LSC) which has the primary responsibility for setting educational policy at individual schools. The LSC hires and evaluates the principal, advises on important issues, including curriculum, textbook selection, discipline and attendance, and approves a school improvement plan and budget. Obviously, the LSC needs to function well if school reform is to succeed.

On the whole, teachers are positive about their LSCs. Two-thirds believe that teacher members on the LSC fairly represent their views. More than two-thirds indicate that the principal and LSC work well together. A smaller proportion, 57 percent, report that the LSC is a cooperative group of people and that the LSC respects teachers' views. Although responses about the LSC are clearly positive, over 20 percent expressed strong negative views about their LSC in terms of lack of cooperation and not respecting teachers' views. In general, teachers expressed more positive

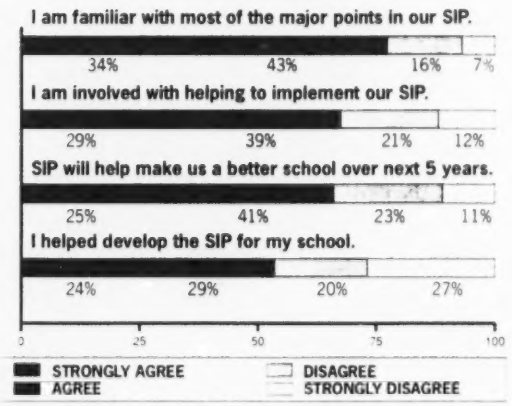
LSC Operations



PPAC Operations



School Improvement Plans



opinions about the work of the principal and teachers as they relate to the LSC, than they did about the LSC as a whole.

A professional personnel advisory committee (PPAC), also created by school reform is composed solely of teachers and serves in an advisory capacity to the LSC. Teachers' responses to questions about the PPAC are also highly favorable. An overwhelming majority (over 75 percent) believe that the PPAC represents their views, and over 60 percent said that it has increased their involvement in policy decisions. Only one-third of the teachers "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that the PPAC is *not* an important voice for teachers in their school.

The School Improvement Plan is another integral part of the school reform initiative. The School Reform Act mandated that the principal in each school develop a plan in consultation with teachers, LSC and community. The plan maps out the school's strategies for improving student achievement and for reaching other goals set out in the reform legislation. Over three-quarters of the teachers are familiar with the major points in their SIPs, and over two-thirds indicate involvement in helping to implement the plan. Over half said that they helped to develop the plan, and two-thirds said that the plan will help make the school better over the next five years.

Interpreting teachers' responses to these questions raises some issues. In particular, what is an appropriate standard for judging these reports? If more than half of the teachers are involved in their schools' SIP, should this be viewed as positive? In questions of this sort, it is difficult to offer a single interpretation. For most of the School Improvement Plan questions, between two-thirds and three-quarters of teachers responded positively. However, it could be argued that *all* teachers should be familiar with the SIP and that *all* teachers should be involved in helping to implement it. From this point of view, any responses lower than, say, 90 percent might be considered low. Alternatively, it could be argued that collaboratively developed School Improvement Plans are new to the Chicago Public Schools and that for any sizable portion of the teachers to be involved represents a significant change from the past. From this perspective, any response over a token, say, 20 percent might be considered positive. In the interest of informing further discussions of these results we simply report two different points of view that have been raised about these numbers.

Teacher involvement in school reform can also be measured by the time they spent on it, which is a direct measure of personal investment. Altogether, 70 percent of teachers spent one hour or more each week working on school

Time spent on reform

About how many hours outside of class do you spend during a typical week in each of the following activities?	One hour or more			
Working on any school committee or reform group.	70%			
Working on LSC or PPAC committees.	32%			
Working on other school committees.	49%			
Working on educational reform with a community or citywide group.	20%			
Since September 1990, about how many times have you attended meetings of:	**0**	**1-2**	**3-5**	**5+**
PPAC or PPAC subcommittees	30%	24%	19%	28%
LSC or LSC subcommittees	30%	33%	18%	19%

committees or with school reform groups. One-third spent one hour or more on LSC or PPAC committees, one-half spent one hour or more working on other school committees, and about one-fifth spent one hour or more working on educational reform with a community or citywide group. In addition to this level of actual involvement, almost 90 percent of the teachers said that they are willing to spend more time making their school better. This willingness to spend more time on school improvement suggests an untapped resource for schools. Future efforts should focus on how to turn these teacher expressions of interest into more extended engagement in school improvement.

Analyses of the survey data indicate that teachers who are more involved with school reform are also more positive about its operation. Teachers who serve on the LSC or the PPAC are more likely to offer favorable opinions about school reform and about the LSC, PPAC and SIP than teachers who are less involved. These positive responses may mean that more positive teachers were initially attracted to the LSC and PPAC; alternatively, teachers may become more positive because of their involvement. These data don't tell us which explanation is more likely, and both may be true.[2]

School Differences

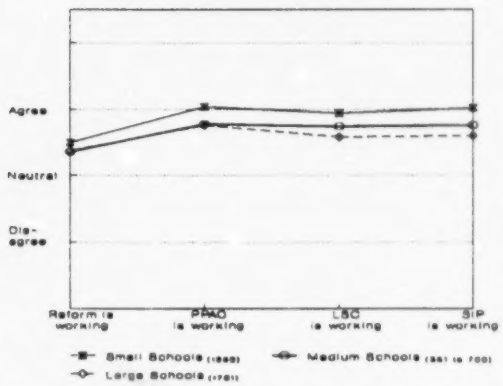
Next, we consider how school characteristics relate to teachers' general reactions to school reform as well as their views about the LSC, the PPAC and the SIP. For this purpose, we grouped questions in each of three areas—LSC, PPAC and SIP—into separate indices, similar to the General Reform index. We looked at a variety of school characteristics including racial composition, student mobility, and concentration of low income students. The statistical analyses reveal that *school size*, or the total student enrollment, is most related to the General Reform, LSC, PPAC, and SIP indices.

To display these relationships, we classified schools into three categories: ***small schools***, with enrollments of 350 and under, ***medium schools***, with between 351 and 700 students, and ***large schools***, with over 700 students. About 15 percent of elementary schools in Chicago are in the small category, 49 percent are medium size, and the remaining 36 percent are large schools. The average Chicago public elementary school has about 640 students. In comparison, the average elementary school in the rest of Illinois has 350. Thus, "small" in Chicago is really "average" elsewhere. In fact, many Chicago elementary schools are larger than many Illinois high schools.

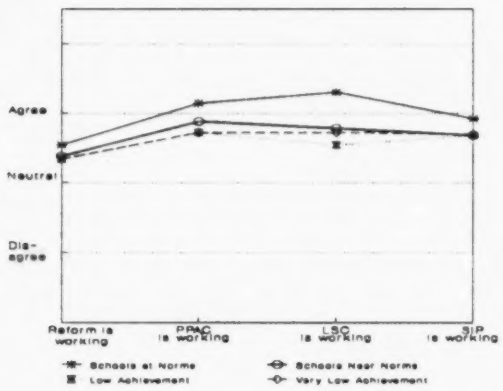
In small schools (350 students and fewer), teachers are more positive about school reform, the LSC, the PPAC, and the SIP. Reports from such schools are consistently higher than in medium and large schools, which are fairly similar to each other. For example, the General Reform Index tends to drop as schools increase in size up to about 600 students. After that, scores stay about the same.

We know of no published reports that specifically document the effects of school size on reform implementation as found here. Clearly, more detailed analyses are needed and will be conducted in the months ahead by Consortium members and staff. More generally, however, extant research clearly documents that large organizational size is a powerful constraint on personal communication and informal social interactions.[3] It is likely that the findings reported here reflect basic differences in the work life of teachers in large and small schools.

School Reform Indicators By School Size



School Reform Indicators by Pre-Reform Achievement



Teachers' responses to the reform questions also depend on the pre-reform achievement levels of schools. To examine this, we formed a composite achievement score for each school based on the Illinois Goal Assessment Program results in reading and math from the spring of 1989 (the first LSCs were elected in the fall of 1989). For display purposes, we created four groups: schools *at norms* with IGAP scores of 250 and greater (10 percent of the CPS elementary schools are in this category); schools *near norms* that scored between 200 and 250 on the IGAP (30 percent of the schools); *low achievement schools* that scored between 150 and 200 (54 percent of the schools); and *very low achievement schools* that scored below 150 (6 percent of the schools). Most schools in the top group had met the legislated mandate of having 50 percent or more of their students at or above national norms prior to reform. Schools in the second group are close to the goal. The schools in the lower two groups, however, are quite distant from the reform goal.

Teachers in schools at norms prior to reform are most likely to give positive reports about school reform and specific governance components. Weak reports are most likely in the very low achieving schools. Nevertheless, it is important to recall that school size, rather than pre- reform achievement, is the most important predictor of how reform is proceeding.

These analyses also revealed that racial composition, the percent of limited-English speaking students, the student mobility rate and the concentration of low-income students are *not* independently related to how well reform is proceeding.[4] Although each is associated with the four reform indicators, these relationships disappear once we account for school size. That is, among schools of similar size, racial composition, student mobility, and the concentration of low-income students do not predict how school reform is being implemented. Individual teacher characteristics, including race, gender and educational background, are also unrelated to responses about school reform and to responses about school quality discussed in the next section.

What Teachers Think About School Communities

The teacher survey contained two pages of questions that asked teachers about the ***quality*** of their schools and work conditions. They asked about diverse topics ranging from safety and order, to collegiality and teacher influence, to parent and community involvement. We have grouped these questions into ten clusters[5] that describe various aspects of the school community, including safety, order, and teacher influence. Each cluster represents a quality that most people associate with "good" schools.[6] Several clusters correspond to specific characteristics of schools that have been documented as being especially important in educating disadvantaged students. The tables in this section present a sample of questions from each cluster. The items presented are typical of the others included in each cluster.

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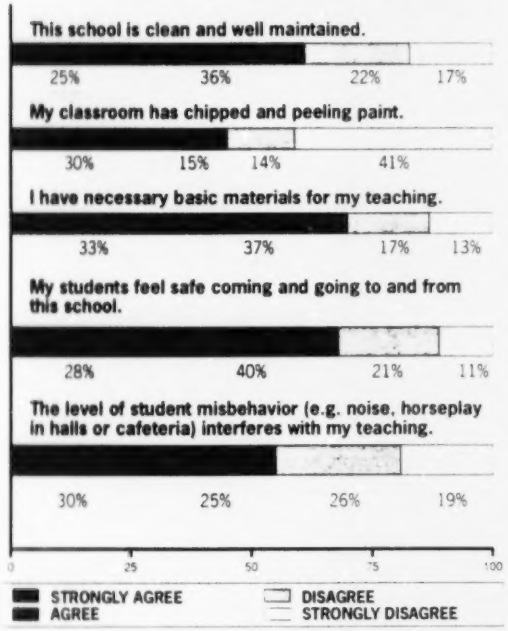
Adequacy of Facilities and Resources



Adequacy of Facilities and Resources, Safety, and Order

More than two-thirds of the teachers responded that they teach in clean and well-maintained schools; two-thirds said that they have the necessary basic supplies and materials for instruction. These responses, like some of the ones reported earlier, are open to different interpretations. On the one hand, a solid majority of the teachers are reporting that they have adequate facilities and resources. On the other hand, it is not unreasonable to expect *all* schools to be clean and *all* teachers to have basic teaching materials. From this perspective, any report lower than, say, 90 percent may be viewed as problematic. The responses on one item seem clear — there is a paint problem in the CPS elementary schools. Almost one-half of the teachers said that their classroom has chipped and peeling paint.

One-third of teachers believe that their students do not feel safe around the school. The survey also asked teachers whether they felt safe coming from and going to school; 23 percent indicated they do not. A sense of safety is a minimal prerequisite to teaching and learning. From this perspective, the fact that a substantial portion of teachers and students may not feel safe is cause for concern.

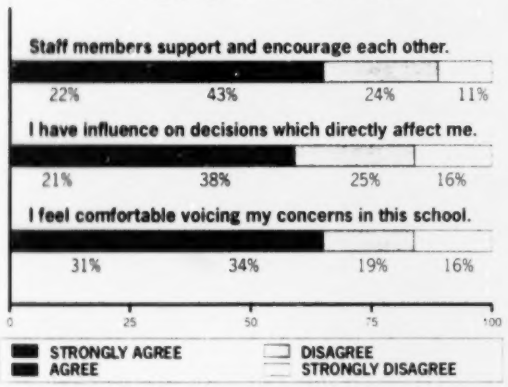
More than one-half of the teachers said that student misbehavior interferes with their teaching. Of the ten school quality clusters, this one received the lowest ratings from teachers. Teachers expressed more concern about student disorder than any other issue. Clearly, many teachers see this as a significant school problem.

Collegiality, Teacher Influence, Teacher Voice

Two-thirds of the teachers agreed that staff members support and encourage each other. This response, too, is open to alternative interpretations. Although a large share of teachers agreed with this statement, in a true learning community most teachers would feel supported and encouraged by their colleagues.

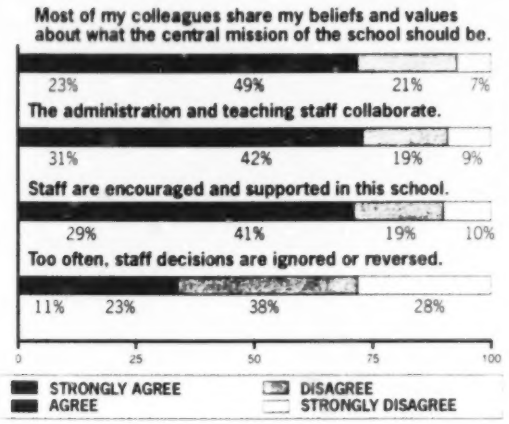
Nearly 60 percent of the teachers agreed that they have influence on the decisions that affect them. However, when asked about specific school policies, teachers indicated less control. Just over half (52 percent) have a great deal or some influence determining the content of staff development; only 44 percent have a great deal or some influence in establishing the school curriculum. Fewer than one-quarter (23 percent) influence the planning of overall school budgets. Teacher influence is another school quality cluster with relatively low ratings.

Collegiality, Influence, Voice



The teacher voice cluster consists of two items that ask about voicing concerns and feeling that one's ideas get a fair hearing. Two-thirds of the teachers feel comfortable voicing their opinions in the school. Although again a clear majority, it is not a consensus opinion. A substantial portion of the teachers, about one-third, indicate reservations about being able to express themselves freely in the school.

Shared Mission, School Leadership



School Mission and School Leadership

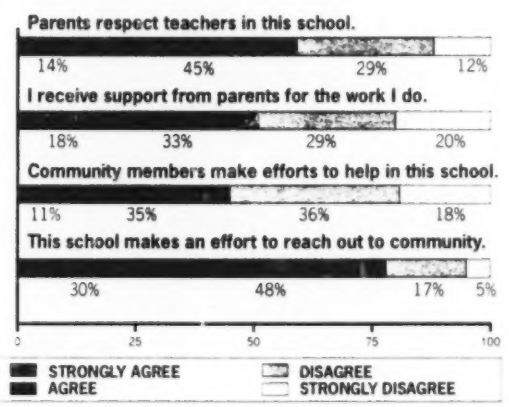
Over 70 percent of the teachers believe that their colleagues share their ideas about the central mission of the school. Although this suggests substantial agreement among the faculty on their school mission, with 28 percent disagreeing about such statements, some opposition remains.

Responses to the school leadership questions are among the most positive in the ten school quality clusters. Almost three-quarter of teachers believe that the administration and teaching staff collaborate in running the school; over 70 percent indicate that staff are encouraged and supported in their school. About one-third of the teachers feel that decisions made by staff committees are too often ignored or reversed by administrators.

School Community Relations and Parent Involvement

Almost 80 percent of the teachers think that their school makes an effort to reach out to the community, but fewer than half think that people in the community make efforts to help the school. Although almost 60 percent of teachers said that parents respect them, only half feel they receive a great deal of support from parents for the work they do. Similarly, only half of the teachers said that most or nearly all of the parents attended parent teacher conferences when requested. Half of the teachers said that *no* parents had volunteered to help in their classroom. Although different interpretations of these data are possible, one observation seems clear — in the minds of many CPS elementary teachers they are not receiving the support they need from parents to do their jobs.

Parent Involvement, Community Relations



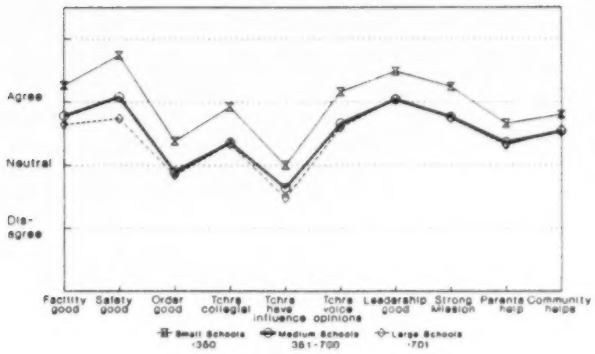
Earlier, we noted that the teachers who are more extensively involved in school reform also have more positive attitudes about reform. Teachers who are on the LSC, an LSC committee, or the PPAC also rate teacher influence and voice more highly than other teachers do. These results appear reasonable in that teachers active in school governance have greater influence than their colleagues and probably feel more free to speak their own opinions. Teachers who are LSC members also rate safety, school leadership and parent involvement somewhat higher.

School Differences

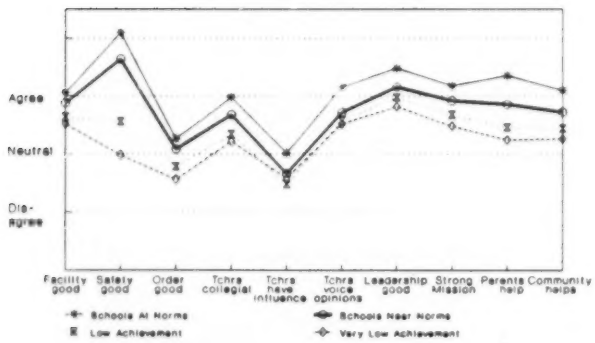
We also explored how school characteristics relate to the ten quality clusters described above. For each cluster, we formed a composite index based on the questions that formed the cluster. We examined each index using the same procedures that we used to analyze the four school reform indicators. A similar pattern occurs here too—pre-reform achievement and size are more important than other school characteristics in predicting school quality ratings. Here, however, pre-reform achievement is as important as school size.

Teachers in small schools gave higher reports on all ten quality indices. Reports from small schools are consistently better than reports from medium

School Quality Indicators By School Size



School Quality Indicators by Pre-Reform Achievement



and large schools. (Medium and large schools do not appear to be different from each other.) The relationship between school size and teachers' ratings of school quality shows an interesting pattern. Whereas the vast majority of highly rated schools are small schools, some small schools have low quality ratings. In contrast, few medium or large schools have high quality ratings. Teacher reports from these schools concentrate in the middle to low range.

The relationship between school size and most of the school quality clusters is easy to understand. Enhanced collegiality, for example, is easier to attain among a small group of teachers who can develop a sense of teamwork more readily than a large group can. Similarly, individual teachers in small schools are likely to have greater influence on school policy because they are more likely to have a personal relationship with the individuals who make policy.

Pre-reform achievement in schools is also related to teachers' ratings of school quality. Schools with students at or above achievement norms prior to reform are rated highest on the ten school quality indicators. As achievement levels drop, so do the quality reports. Although the actual process at work demands more study, one observation is warranted — the schools most in need of academic improvements are currently working from the weakest organizational base.

Teaching, Instructional Change and Professional Growth

This concluding section of the report discusses several key "psychological" dimensions of how teachers feel about their classroom work. These include: teachers' ***expectations*** for their students—whether they believe students are capable of learning; their sense of ***competency***—how good they believe they are at their jobs; and ***efficacy***—whether they think they are accomplishing something of value. This section includes teachers' reports about their instructional practices—has reform changed their classroom teaching and do they expect to change in the future.

Teachers expressed moderately high expectations for their students' learning. About two-thirds of the teachers believe that their students are capable of learning the material that they are supposed to teach. Relatively few teachers (about 15 percent) strongly maintain that this is not true. At the same time, teachers also believe that their students have attitudes and habits that greatly reduce their chances for academic success. Taken together, these two items provide a window into teachers' thinking about their efforts. Apparently, teachers believe that students have the innate ability to succeed in school, but the clear absence of that success is explained by other factors in the home and community which foster bad habits and attitudes that interfere with learning.

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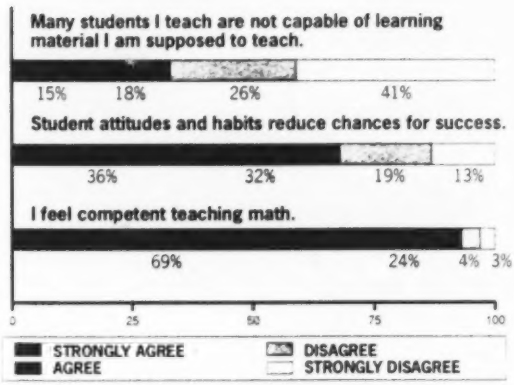
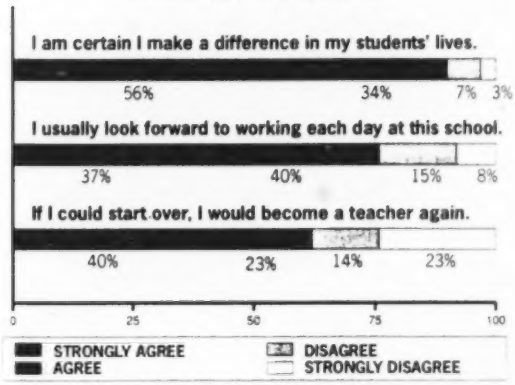
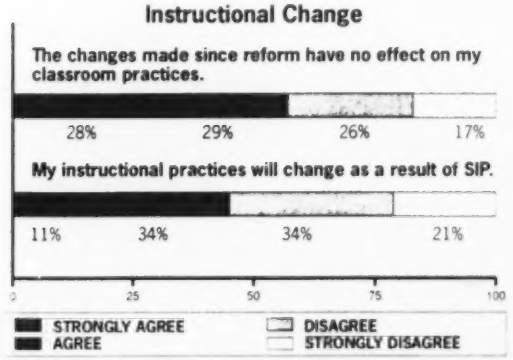
Teacher Expectations and Competency



Satisfaction and Efficacy



Instructional Change



Teachers appear to be saying that the problem is not located in the child, the teacher or the school, but rather in the home and the community.

The picture sharpens when we consider teachers' self-report about competency and efficacy. Chicago elementary school teachers feel extremely competent teaching reading, math, and writing. Almost 95 percent of the teachers said that they feel competent teaching math, with similarly high percentages in reading and writing. There is virtual unanimity in this regard.

Teachers also report a strong sense of efficacy. Ninety percent of them are certain that they are making a difference in the lives of their students. Over three-quarters of them look forward to working each day at their school. Approximately 60 percent said that if they could start over they would become a teacher again. Almost one-quarter, however, appear disenchanted and would definitely not become a teacher again.

Taken together, these statistics imply a relatively high level of teacher self-efficacy and competence that some may view as troubling in the context of the relatively low achievement levels in Chicago. In fact, these teacher self-reports are virtually unrelated to prior school achievement (see graph on next page). Teachers working in schools with very low student achievement report the same level of competency as teachers from schools where pre-reform achievement was at or above national norms. Although there are some differences in reported efficacy, with higher levels occurring in high achieving schools, the size of these differences are very small.

Turning attention to teachers' views about instructional change, more than one-half of the teachers said that reform had not had an effect on their classroom practices. Further, fewer than one-half said that their instructional practices will change as a result of the School Improvement Plan. These results are interesting when compared with teachers' reports about improvements in their schools. Two-thirds of the teachers believe that the SIP will help to make their school better, yet only 45 percent see the SIP as changing their instructional practices. Apparently a substantial number of teachers expect improvement to occur externally rather than through a change in their own classroom practices.

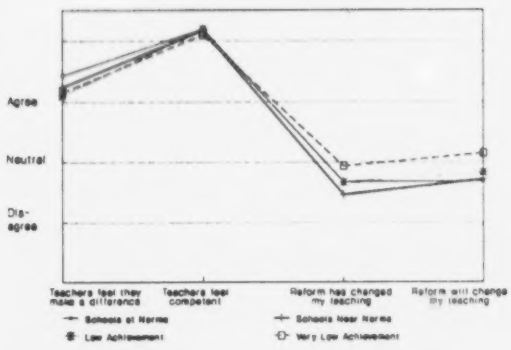
Because ultimately school reform will be judged in terms of whether classroom teaching and learning improves, we looked more closely at teachers' reports about past and future change in their classroom practice. In particular, we sought to uncover the characteristics of teachers who were more likely to change and the types of schools where such change might be more common. For this purpose we combined the two questions about instructional change into a single index and explored its relation to a variety of teacher and school

characteristics.[8] Although the pattern of results was fairly complex, some relations clearly stand out:

- Teachers who have a higher sense of self-efficacy and are more involved in school governance efforts are more likely to report change in their classroom practices.
- Such accounts of change are more likely in schools where reform is generally seen as positive and where teachers have greater influence over school decision making. They are also more likely in schools where student disorder is problematic and prior-achievement is low.

This latter finding, which is displayed in the graph to the left, represents one of the most tantalizing findings in this entire report. Teachers in the lowest achieving schools are more likely than colleagues in higher achieving schools to report that school reform has changed their classroom practices and that the SIP will lead to a change in instructional practices in the future. Although the size of these differences among schools in reports about instructional change is modest, the pattern among schools is encouraging — more instructional change appears to be occurring in the places most in need of change.

Instructional Indicators By Pre-Reform Achievement



A finding of this sort immediately raises many other questions. Can these reports be confirmed by independent school observations? Is the reported instructional change meaningful, that is, is it likely to produce genuine gains in student learning? If instructional change is occurring, what is the impetus for this change—school reform or some earlier school improvement efforts such as the Chicago Effective Schools Project or Project CANAL? Clearly, these first results, although positive, require more investigation if we are to better understand the potential of Chicago school reform to promote genuine instructional change.

Professional activity

Since June of 1990, have you engaged in any of the following?	YES	NO
Attended worksops or courses sponsored by the Chicago Public Schools.	62%	38%
Attended workshops or courses sponsored by professional organizations.	55%	45%
Taken courses at colleges or universities	44%	56%
None of these	13%	87%

About how many hours outside of class do you spend during a typical week on background reading and education?

One hour or less	Two to three hours	More than three hours
35%	36%	29%

Finally, most experts agree that a key to such classroom change is professional development. Chicago elementary school teachers report a surprisingly high level of professional development activities last year. More than 40 percent took a course at a college or university. Well over 50 percent voluntarily attended workshops sponsored by either the CPS or professional organizations. Only 13 percent indicated that they were not involved last year in some out-of-school professional development activity. Although we have no way of judging the quality of these programs or whether this professional activity is at all linked to meaningful classroom changes, the fact that it is occurring must be viewed as positive.

Because professional development is so central to improvements in teaching and learning we also explored these data more carefully, looking for clues as to which teachers were more likely to be involved and the types of schools where such activity might be more common. We formed another composite index, in this case combining the items on workshop participation with the amount of time on professional reading. Although the overall patterns are again fairly complex, some findings stand out:

- Younger faculty, teachers with higher levels of professional education and those more involved in school governance efforts are more likely

to be pursuing professional development. This is also true for more efficacious teachers and those who report higher levels of competence.

- In general, school characteristics do not appear very important. Somewhat higher levels of professional development are reported in schools where the average age of teachers is lower, where pre-reform achievement is higher and the percentage of low-income students is greater. These differences, however, are small.

In sum, professional development seems mainly a matter of individual teacher initiative with the more competent, involved and better educated teachers more likely to commit efforts to improve. The reverse is also true. The teachers who may be in most need of professional development—older, less well-educated, less competent and efficacious, and less involved—are least likely to be pursuing it.

Next steps

This Consortium report is intended to stimulate discussions across the city about school improvement. The 401 schools that had a return rate of 50 percent or more will receive a school profile very shortly showing how their teachers responded to the questions discussed in this report. These school level results can assist school community members to understand better how teachers perceive their school and their students. Such understanding provides the base for enhanced local efforts at improvement. The Consortium is preparing materials to help schools and councils interpret their profiles. More generally, the Consortium is committed to promoting continued discussions about the conditions of education in the city and what it will take to transform the spirit of school reform—that all children **can** learn—into a reality where all children **do** learn. ✦

Other Findings

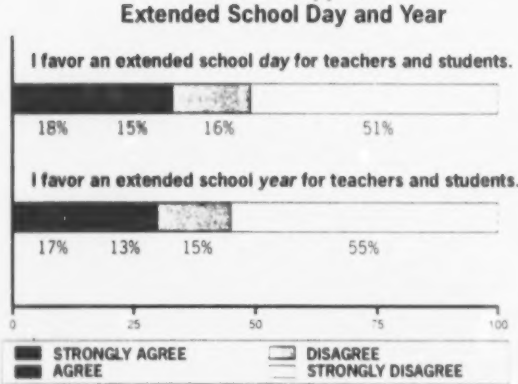
Supplies and Materials

Last year, elementary school teachers spent almost $2 million of their own money on school supplies and materials, not including expenses for field trips, gifts and other items.

Test Preparation Time

Over 40% of teachers spent more than 12 hours on preparation for standardized tests such as the ITBS and IGAP. The responses lead to a total estimate of 155,464 hours spent in test preparation in the CPS elementary schools last year. This is equivalent to a teacher devoting 22,209 seven-hour days or 120 complete school years to test preparation. The cost, figured at an average teacher salary of $35,000 is about $4,200,000.

Teachers Oppose Extended School Day and Year



Commentary on the Teacher Survey Report

From the Teacher Advisory Group, John Kotsakis, Chicago Teachers Union

The survey of Chicago's elementary teachers provides some interesting insights into attitudes and perspectives of those responsible for improving classroom instruction. Altogether, the teachers involved in the project were satisfied with the results: they feel that the survey provides both interesting and useful information.

When the teachers met to hear the overall report on the survey, they seemed genuinely pleased that they were involved. Most were very excited about the prospects of "bumping" their local school's results against the city-wide data. More importantly, they felt that local survey results could prove extremely useful to PPACs and LSCs for serious reflection.

But this was a long detailed survey with four interconnected but separate sections, and teachers noted some contradictions in the responses from one section to another. Overall, everyone agreed that the results show that the teachers are generally positive about the changes which have taken place in their schools since the implementation of the School Reform Act.

There is a caveat to this generally positive view. The percentage of teachers who respond favorably on most questions is not so high that anyone could become euphoric. More importantly, the modest positive responses in such critical areas as instructional leadership, teacher involvement in policy, planning and instructional improvement show that the school system has a long way to go before teachers are fully vested in the reform process, especially as it applies to instruction and learning. The teachers involved in the survey planning were emphatic that its results in the above areas confirmed what they themselves perceive among their colleagues.

The teacher committee also felt that close scrutiny of the survey results would yield additional useful information, especially if responses could be cross-keyed to see how different respondents perceived some important areas. They encouraged the Consortium to explore these possible research avenues and to continue with a similar study of high school teachers in school year '91-92.

From the Principal Advisory Group, Sara Spurlark, Center for School Improvement

At a Leadership Institute sponsored by the Center for School Improvement, twenty-four Chicago Public School elementary principals were briefed on both the city-wide results of the teacher survey and the results for two unidentified schools. Principals had mixed reactions to the fact that teachers were most positive about their PPAC, somewhat less positive about the SIP and only moderately positive regarding the LSC. They pointed out that there is a wide variety of PPAC models and varying levels of effectiveness.

Principals expressed particular concern over the results related to teachers' expectations for students, teachers' sense of competency, and staff development. They did not share teachers' opinions of their competency and did not necessarily see a positive correlation between teachers' involvement in professional development activities and their skill in the classroom. Most agreed that to determine the impact of staff development on instruction it is necessary to "get into classrooms and look."

There was considerable discussion of the fact that one-quarter of the teachers would not become teachers again. Questions were raised about the level of dissatisfaction in other professions.

As the review of findings proceeded, initial skepticism dissipated. Principals were particularly intrigued with the results of the survey for individual schools and how these results could be used to diagnose the areas where reform seems to be working and the areas where more attention is needed. Unanimous interest was expressed in a session in which they could analyze their own school data in preparation for working with teachers this year.

From the Consortium Steering Committee, Janet Fredericks, Northeastern Illinois University

The Steering Committee of The Consortium on Chicago School Research met on August 5th for a presentation of the preliminary results of the Survey of CPS Elementary School Teachers. Although members of the Steering Committee represent a variety of organizations, they share a similar educational experience which includes formal training and interest in survey research.

The committee hopes to distribute the results of the survey to a wide and diverse audience. Maximum use of the survey findings can have a positive impact on educational policy and on individual school programs. Therefore, it was considered essential to present the survey findings in a neutral manner and in such a way that different audiences will recognize the objectivity.

The group was fascinated by specific aspects of the research findings and the implications of the data for educational policy and reform. They found it particularly important that the size of a school was the greatest factor in creating a positive climate for effective school reform. The results of the survey will effect policy deliberations regarding optimum school size and may generate new organizational designs for large schools. It was heartening to learn that schools with faculty who favor reform were evenly spread throughout the Chicago geographic area and that most teachers feel that the PPAC's have had a positive impact.

The full impact of the data, its implications for educational policy and the need for future studies based on issues raised by this data still need to be examined. Our research agenda must include not only a wider universe of study, but also longitudinal analyses. It will be important to consider the effect of time on teacher involvement with School Improvement Plans, the impact of reform on student achievement, and the functioning of LSCs. The Consortium and its member organizations are developing a research agenda and an indicator system. These should assist formulating wise decisions to have a positive impact on educational opportunities for all children.

Footnotes

1. All individual teacher responses reported here are based on teachers from the random sample of 80 schools that were targeted for special follow-up to assure maximum response rates. These results are based on 2246 teachers—75 percent of the total. When statistics are broken down by school type (e.g. size and pre-reform achievement) these are based on the full sample of teachers in the 401 schools that had a response rate of 50 percent or more. Our preliminary examination of possible non-response biases indicates that both samples are highly representative of Chicago's elementary teachers and schools.

2. One small scale survey prior to the LSC elections in October of 1989 found that teachers who were more knowledgeable about school reform were also more optimistic about its possible effects and they said that they were more likely to become involved. See: Easton, J.Q. (1989). Teacher attitudes toward school reform. *Chicago Panel on Public School Policy and Finance.*

3. See for example: Bryk, A.S., Lee, V. & Smith, J. (1990). High school organization and its effect on teachers and students: An interpretive summary of the research. In W.H. Clune and J.F. Witte (Eds) *Choice and Control in American Education.* Philadelphia: Falmer Press. Also, Driscoll, M.E. (1990). The formation of community in public schools: Findings and hypotheses. *Administrator's Notebook, XXXIV (4).* And, Fowler, W.J. & Walberg, H.J. (1991). School size, characteristics, and outcomes. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 13,* 189-202.

4. These findings are the result of regression analyses that controlled for school size, pre-reform achievement, student mobility, racial composition and the concentration of low income students. School size is the strongest statistical predictor for these reform related outcomes.

5. Each cluster contains between two and seven items, with three to five in the typical cluster. In addition to being conceptually related to each other, the items in each cluster are also statistically related. All clusters have acceptable internal consistency as measured by the Cronbach alpha.

6. The design of this portion of the survey was significantly shaped by stakeholder interviews conducted by the Consortium for its Research Agenda Setting activity. We specifically inquired about the criteria that participants use to make judgments about good schools and the information that they would want in making a decision to send their child to a school. We also referred to several national surveys for guidance in selecting questions.

7. The School Improvement Plans themselves do not encourage instructional changes and contain little evidence of instructional innovation. See: Department of Research, Evaluation and Planning (1990). The School Improvement Plans of 1990: What the Schools Will Do. *Chicago Public Schools.*

8. The results reported here, and for the level of teachers' professional development in the next section, are based on a hierarchical linear model analysis using a variety of teacher characteristics including demographic variables (age, race, and level of professional training), teacher engagement (time spent on LSC, PPAC or other reform activities, and time spent on personal professional development), and psychological variables (efficacy and competence); and school characteristics including size, racial composition, student mobility, low percent low-income student, pre-reform achievement level, composite teacher characteristics (average age, education level, and time involvements), the four school reform indices and the ten school quality indices. Only selected results from these analyses, those that appear particularly strong and robust (i.e. they continue to appear across a variety of analytic models) are reported here. For more information see the technical report.

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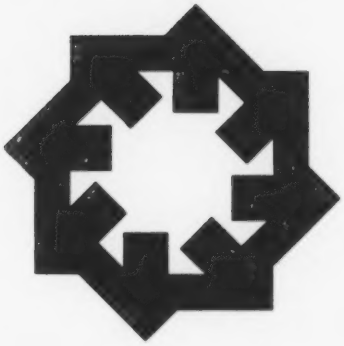

The Consortium
on Chicago
School Research

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University of Chicago
Chair of the Steering Committee

Penny Sebring
Associate Director
The Consortium on
Chicago School Research

Maxey Bacchus
Chicago Public Schools

Larry Braskamp
University of Illinois at Chicago

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Chicago Panel on Public
School Policy and Finance

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Designs for Change

Jeri Nowakowski
North Central Regional
Educational Laboratory

William Pink
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Sylvia Puente
Latino Institute

Al Ramirez
Illinois State Board
of Education

Background/Acknowledgements:

Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn is a project of the Consortium on Chicago School Research, an affiliation of local universities, professional associations, education research and advocacy groups, and the Chicago Public Schools. Chicago area researchers established the Consortium in order to encourage broad access to the research agenda setting process; to promote wide dissemination and discussion of research findings; and to assure high standards of quality in research design, data collection and analysis. This teacher survey is the Consortium's third major project: it has completed *A Commentary and Recommendations on the Indicators for Assessing Reform in the Chicago Public Schools' Systemwide Plan* and a *Research Agenda* for studying school reform in Chicago.

The five organizations listed on the front cover formed a work group to develop, administer, analyze and write the results of the teacher survey. Many other individuals, including Jennifer Cox, Ken Frank, Larry Friedman, Kim Hermanson, Bill Rice, and Sandra Storey played major roles in conducting this survey. The Consortium provided extensive administrative and technical support for this project.

Charting Reform: The Teachers' Turn resulted from extensive in-kind contributions from members of the survey work group and from other Consortium members. The Chicago Public Schools distributed the surveys, scanned the results, and created a computer tape for the data analysis. No CPS money was spent on this survey. Financial support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, and the Spencer Foundation covered the printing costs.

5835 South Kimbark Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60637 (312) 702-0663